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signed, in many instances, to that congeries of symptoms so well described by Dr Hamilton in his valuable work on the use of Purgatives. To the ample testimony in favour of the extensive employment of these medicines in this disease, the result of the practice of this dispensary, might, if necessary give additional weight. It ought not however to be concealed that in some cases,

after a long use of cathartics, the cure has appeared to be accelerated by the administration of antimonial diaphoretics.

Such are the few remarks, which a desire to comply with custom, rather than any conviction of their importance has induced me to offer on the diseases which have fallen under my own inspection.

York-street.

S. L.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

AN EULOGIUM ON PRESIDENT MONTESQUIEU; BY MONSIEUR D'ALEMBERT.

**C**HARLES DE SECONDAT, Baron of La Brede and Montesquieu, late president *a Mortier* of the parliament of Bourdeaux, member of the French academy, of the royal academy of sciences and belles lettres of Prussia, and of the royal society of London, was born at the castle of La Brede, near Bourdeaux, the 18th of January, 1689, of a noble family of Guyenne. His great-grandfather, John de Secondat, steward of the household to Henry the second, king of Navarre, and afterwards to Jane daughter of that king, who married Antony of Bourbon, purchased the estate of Montesquieu for the sum of 10,000 livres, which this princess gave him by an authentic deed, as a reward for his probity and services.

Henry the third, king of Navarre, afterwards Henry fourth, king of France, erected the lands of Montesquieu into a barony, in favour of Jacob de Secondat, son of John, first one of the gentlemen in ordinary of the bed-chamber to this prince, and afterwards colonel of the regiment of Chatillon. John Gaston de Secondat, his second son, having married a daughter of the first pre-

sident of the parliament of Bourdeaux, purchased the office of president *a Mortier* in this society. He had several children, one of whom entered into the service, distinguished himself in it, and quitted it very early in life. This was the father of Charles de Secondat, author of the *Spirit of Laws*. These particulars may perhaps appear misplaced, at the beginning of the *Eloge* of a philosopher, whose name stands so little in need of ancestors; but let us not envy their memory that éclat which this name reflects upon it.

The early marks of his genius, a presage sometimes so deceitful, was not so in Charles de Secondat; he discovered very soon what he one day would be, and his father employed all his attention to cultivate this rising genius, the object of his hope and of his tenderness. At the age of twenty, young Montesquieu already prepared materials for the *Spirit of Laws*, by a well digested extract from those immense volumes which compose the body of the civil law: thus heretofore Newton laid in his early youth the foundation of works, which have rendered him immortal. The study of juris-prudence, however, though less dry to M. de Montesquieu, than to the most part

of those who apply to it, because he studied it as a philosopher, was not sufficient for the extent and activity of his genius. He inquired deeply at the same time, into subjects still more important and more delicate,\* and discussed them in silence, with that wisdom, with that decency, and with that equity, which he has since discovered in his works.

A brother of his father, president *a Mortier* of the parliament of Bourdeaux, an able judge and virtuous citizen, the oracle of his own society and of his province; having lost an only son, and wanting to preserve in his own corps, that elevated spirit, which he had endeavoured to infuse into it, left his fortune and his office to M. de Montesquieu. He had been one of the counsellors of the parliament of Bourdeaux, since the 24th of February, 1714, and was received president *a Mortier* the 13th of July, 1716.

Some years after, in 1722, during the king's minority, his society employed him to present remonstrances upon occasion of a new impost. Placed between the throne and the people, he filled, like a respectful subject, and courageous magistrate, the employment, so noble, and so little envied, of making the cries of the unfortunate reach the Sovereign: the public misery, represented with as much address, as force of argument, obtained that justice which it demanded. This success, 'tis true, much more unfortunately for the state than for him, was of as short continuance, as if it had been unjust. Scarcely had the voice of the people ceased to be heard, but the impost, which had been suppressed, was replaced by another:

but the good citizen had done his duty.

He was received the 3d of April, 1716, into the academy of Bourdeaux, which was then only beginning. A taste for music, and for works of pure entertainment, had at first assembled together the members who composed it. M. de Montesquieu believed, with reason, that the rising ardour and talents of his friends might be employed with still greater advantage in physical subjects. He was persuaded that nature, so worthy of being beheld every where, found also in all places eyes worthy of viewing her; that, on the contrary, works of taste, not admitting of mediocrity, and the metropolis, being the centre of men of abilities, and opportunities of improvement in this way, it was too difficult to gather together at a distance from it, a sufficient number of distinguished writers. He looked upon the societies for belles lettres; so strangely multiplied in our provinces, as a kind, or rather as a shadow of literary luxury, which is of prejudice to real opulence, without even presenting us with the appearance of it. Luckily the Duke de la Force, by a prize which he had just founded at Bourdeaux, seconded these rational and just designs. It was judged that an experiment properly made would be preferable to a weak discourse, or a bad poem; and Bourdeaux got an academy of sciences.

M. de Montesquieu, not at all eager to show himself to the public, seemed, according to the expression of a great genius, to wait for *an age ripe for writing*. It was not till 1721, that is to say, at 32 years of age, that he published the *Persian Letters*. The *Siamois*, and the *serious and comic amusements*, might have furnished him with the idea of it; but he excelled his model. The de-

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\* It was a work in the form of letters, the purpose of which was to prove that the idolatry of most of the Pagans did not appear to deserve eternal damnation.

scription of oriental manners, real or supposed, of the pride and phlegm of Asiatic love, is but the smallest object of these letters; it only serves, so to speak, as a pretence for a delicate satire upon our manners, and for treating of several important subjects, which the author went to the bottom of, while he only appeared to glance at them. In this kind of moving picture, Usbec chiefly exposes, with as much genteel easiness as energy, whatever amongst us most struck his penetrating eyes; our way of treating the most silly things seriously, and of turning the most important into a joke; our conversations which are so blustering and so frivolous; our impatience even in the midst of pleasure itself; our prejudices and our actions perpetually in contradiction with our understandings; so much love of glory joined with so much respect for the idol of court favour; our courtiers so mean and so vain; our exterior politeness to, and our real contempt of strangers, or our affected regard for them; the fantasticalness of our tastes, than which there is nothing lower, but the eagerness of all Europe to adopt them; our barbarous disdain for the two most respectable occupations of a citizen, commerce and magistracy; our literary disputes so keen and so useless; our rage for writing before we think, and for judging before we understand. To this picture, which is lively but without malice, he opposes, in the apologue of the Troglodites, the description of a virtuous people, become wise by misfortunes. A piece worthy of the portico. In another place, he represents philosophy, which had been a long time smothered, appearing all of a sudden, regaining by a rapid progress, the time which he had lost; penetrating even amongst the Russians at the voice of a genius which invites her;

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while, among other people of Europe, superstition, like a thick atmosphere, prevents that light which surrounds them on all hands from reaching them. In fine, by the principles which he has established concerning the nature of ancient and modern government, he presents us with the bud of those bright ideas, which have been since developed by the author in his great work.

These different subjects, deprived at present of the graces of novelty which they had when the Persian Letters first appeared, will for ever preserve the merit of that original character which the author has had the art to give them. A merit by so much the more real, that in this case, it proceeds alone from the genius of the writer, and not from that foreign veil with which he covered himself: for Usbec acquired, during his abode in France, not only so perfect a knowledge of our morals, but even so strong a tincture of our manners, that his style makes us often forget his country. This small defect in point of probability, was perhaps not without design and address: when he was exposing our follies and vices, he wanted without doubt also to do justice to our advantages. He was fully conscious of the insipidity of a direct panegyric; he has more delicately praised us, by so often assuming our own air to satirize us more agreeably.

Notwithstanding the success of this work, M. de Montesquieu did not openly declare himself the author of it. Perhaps he thought that by this means he would more easily escape that literary satire, which spares anonymous writings the more willingly, because it is always the person and not the work which is the aim of its darts. Perhaps he was afraid of being attacked on account of the pretended contrast of the Persian Letters with the gravity of his office;

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"a sort of reproach," said he, "which critics never fail to make, because it requires no effort of genius." But his secret was discovered, and the public already pointed him out to the French academy. The event demonstrated how prudent M. de Montesquieu's silence had been. Usbec expresses himself sometimes freely enough, not concerning the fundamentals of christianity, but about matters which too many people affect to confound with christianity itself; about the spirit of persecution with which so many christians have been animated; about the temporal usurpations of ecclesiastic power; about the excessive multiplication of monasteries, which deprive the state of subjects, without giving worshippers to God; about some opinions which have in vain been attempted to be established as principles; about our religious disputes, always violent and always fatal. If he appears any where to touch upon more delicate questions, and which more nearly interest the christian religion, his reflections weighed with justice, are in fact very favourable to revelation; because he only shows how little human reason left to itself, knows concerning these subjects. In a word, among the genuine letters of M. de Montesquieu, the foreign printer had inserted some by another hand: and they ought at least, before the author was condemned, to have distinguished which properly belonged to him. Without regard to these considerations, on the one hand, hatred under the name of zeal, and on the other, zeal without discernment or understanding, rose and united themselves against the *Persian Letters*. Informers, a species of men dangerous and base, which even in a wise government are unfortunately sometimes listened to, alarmed, by an unfaithful extract, the piety of the ministry. M. de

Montesquieu, by the advice of his friends, supported by the public voice, having offered himself for that place in the French academy, vacant by the death of M. de Sacy; the minister wrote a letter to the academy, that his majesty would never agree to the election of the author of the *Persian Letters*: that he had not read the book; but that persons in whom he placed confidence, had informed him of their poisonous and dangerous tendency. M. de Montesquieu perceived what a stroke such an accusation might be to his person, his family, and the tranquillity of his life. He neither put so high a price upon literary honours, either keenly to seek them, or to affect to disdain them, when they came in his way, nor in a word, to regard the simple want of them as a misfortune. But a perpetual exclusion, and especially the motives of that exclusion, appeared to him to be an injury. He saw the minister, declared to him that for particular reasons he did not own the *Persian Letters*; but that he would be still farther from disowning a work for which he believed he had no reason to blush; and that he ought to be judged after a reading, and not upon an information: at last the minister did what he ought to have begun with;—he read the book, loved the author, and learned to place his confidence better. The French academy was not deprived of one of its greatest ornaments; and France had the happiness to preserve a subject which superstition or calumny was ready to deprive her of. For M. de Montesquieu had declared to the government, that after that kind of affront they were about to put upon him, he would go among foreigners, who with open arms offered to receive him, in quest of that safety, that repose, and perhaps those rewards, which

he might have hoped for in his own country. The nation would have deplored this loss, and the disgrace of it would notwithstanding have fallen upon it.

The late marshal D'Estrees, at that time director of the French academy, conducted himself upon this occasion like a virtuous courtier, and a person of truly elevated mind: he was neither afraid of abusing his credit, nor of endangering it; he supported his friend, and justified Socrates. This act of courage, so dear to learning, so worthy of being imitated at present, and so honourable to the memory of marshal D'Estrees, ought not to have been forgot in his panegyric.

M. de Montesquieu was received the 24th of January, 1728. His discourse is one of the best which has been pronounced upon a like occasion: its merit is by so much the greater, that those who were to be received, till then confined by those forms, and by those *Eloges* which were in use, and to which a kind of prescription subjected them, had not as yet dared to step over this circle to treat of other subjects, or had not at least thought of comprehending them in it. Even in this state of constraint he had the happiness to succeed. Amongst several strokes with which his discourse shines we may easily distinguish the deep thinking writer by the singular portrait of Cardinal Richlieu, *who taught France the secret of its strength, and Spain that of its weakness; who freed Germany from their chains, and gave her new ones.* We must admire Monsieur de Montesquieu for having been able to overcome the difficulty of his subject, and we ought to pardon those who have not had the same success.

The new academician was by so much the more worthy of this title, that he had not long before renounc-

ed every other business to give himself entirely up to his genius and taste. However important the place which he occupied was, with whatever judgment and integrity he might have fulfilled its duties, he perceived that there were objects more worthy of employing his talents; that a citizen is accountable to his country and to mankind for all the good which he can do; and that he could be more useful to the one and the other, by instructing them with his writings, than he could be by determining a few particular disputes in obscurity. All these reflections determined him to sell his office. He was no longer a magistrate, and was now only a man of letters.

But to render himself useful by his works to different nations, it was necessary that he should know them: it was with this view that he undertook to travel: his aim was to examine every where the natural and moral world, to study the laws and constitution of every country; to visit the learned, the writers, the celebrated artists; every where to seek for those rare and singular geniuses, whose conversation sometimes supplies the place of many years observation and residence. M. de Montesquieu might have said, like Democritus; "I have forgot nothing to instruct myself: I have quitted my country and travelled over the universe, the better to know truth: I have seen all illustrious personages of my time." But there was this difference between the French Democritus and him of Abdera, that the first travelled to instruct men, and the second to laugh at them.

He first went to Vienna, where he often saw the celebrated prince Eugene. This hero, so fatal to France (to which he might have been so useful) after having given a check to the fortune of Lewis XIV. and hum-

bled the Ottoman pride, lived during the peace without pomp, loving and cultivating letters in a court, where they are little honoured, and setting an example to his masters how they should protect them. M. de Montesquieu thought that he could discover in his conversation some remains of affection for his ancient country. Prince Eugène especially discovered it, as much as an enemy could, when he talked of the fatal consequences of that intestine division which has so long troubled the church of France: the statesman foresaw its duration and effects, and foretold it like a philosopher.

M. de Montesquieu left Vienna to visit Hungary, an opulent and fertile country, inhabited by a haughty and generous nation, the scourge of its tyrants, and the support of its sovereigns. As few persons know this country well, he has written with care this part of his travels.

From Germany he went to Italy. he saw at Venice the famous Mr. Law, who had nothing remaining of his grandeur, but projects fortunately destined to die away in his own head, and a diamond which he pawned to play at games of hazard. One day the conversation turned on the famous system which Law had invented; an epoch of so many calamities and so many great fortunes, and especially of a remarkable corruption in our morals. As the parliament of Paris, the immediate depository of the laws during a minority, had made some resistance to the Scotch minister on this occasion, M. de Montesquieu asked him why he had never tried to overcome this resistance by a method almost always infallible in England, by the grand mover of human actions, in a word, by money. "These are not," answered Law, "Geniuses so ardent and so generous as my countrymen; but they are much

more incorruptible." We shall add, without any prejudice of national vanity, that a society which is free for some short limited time, ought to resist corruption more, than one which is always so: the first when it sells its liberty loses it; the second, so to speak, only lends it, and exercises it even when it is doing so. Thus the circumstances and nature of government, give rise to the vices and virtues of nations.

Another person no less famous, whom M. de Montesquieu saw still oftener at Venice, was Count de Bonheval. This man, so known by his adventures, which were not yet at an end, and flattered with conversing with so good a judge, and one so worthy of hearing them, often related to him the remarkable circumstances of his life, recited the military actions in which he had been engaged, and drew the characters of those generals and ministers whom he had known. M. de Montesquieu often recalled to mind these conversations, and related different strokes of them to his friends.

He went from Venice to Rome. In this ancient capital of the world, which is still so in some respects, he applied himself chiefly to examine that which distinguishes it most at present; the works of Raphael, of Titian, and of Michael Angelo. He had not made a particular study of the fine arts; but that expression, which shines in the master-pieces of this kind, infallibly strikes every man of genius. Accustomed to study nature, he knew her again when well imitated, as a like portrait strikes all those who are familiarly acquainted with the original. Those productions of art must indeed be wretched, whose whole beauty is only discernable by artists.

After having travelled over Italy, M. de Montesquieu came to Switzerland. He carefully examined those

vast countries which are watered by the Rhine. There was nothing more for him to see in Germany, FOR FREDERIC DID NOT YET REIGN. He stopt afterwards some time in the United Provinces; an admirable monument what human industry, animated by a love of liberty, can do. At last he went to England, where he staid three years. Worthy of visiting and entertaining the greatest of men, he had nothing to regret but that he had not made this voyage sooner. Newton and Locke were dead. But he had often the honour of paying his respects to their protectress, the celebrated queen of England, who cultivated philosophy upon a throne, and who properly esteemed and valued M. de Montesquieu. He was no less well received by the nation, which, however, was not obliged to follow the example of its superiors on this occasion. He formed at London intimate friendships with men accustomed to think, and to prepare themselves for great actions, by profound studies; with them he instructed himself in the nature of the government, and attained to a thorough knowledge of it. We speak here after the public testimonies which have been given him by the English themselves, so jealous of our advantages, and so little disposed to acknowledge any superiority in us.

As he had examined nothing either with the prejudice of an enthusiast, or the austerity of a cynic, he brought back from his travels, neither a saucy disdain for foreigners, nor a still more misplaced contempt for his own country. It was the result of his observations, that Germany was made to travel in, Italy to sojourn in, England to think in, and France to live in.

After his return to his own country, M. de Montesquieu retired for two years to his estate of la Brede.

He there enjoyed in peace that solitude which our having viewed the tumult and hurry of the world, serves to render more agreeable: he lived with himself, after having so long lived in a different way: and what interests us most, he put the last hand to his work on *the Cause of the Grandeur and Declension of the Romans*, which appeared in 1734.

Empires, like men, must increase, decay, and be extinguished. But this necessary revolution has often hidden causes, which the veil of time conceals from us, and which mystery or their apparent minuteness has even sometimes hid from the eyes of contemporaries.

Nothing in this respect resembles modern history more than ancient history. That of the Romans however deserves, in this respect, to be made an exception of; it presents us with a rational policy, a connected system of aggrandizement, which does not permit us to attribute the fortune of this people to obscure and inferior springs. The causes of the Roman grandeur may then be found in history; and it is the business of the philosopher to discover them. Besides, there are no systems in this study, as in that of physic; these are almost always overthrown, because one new and unforeseen experiment can overturn them in an instant; on the contrary, when we carefully collect the facts which the ancient history of a country transmits to us, if we do not always gather together all the materials which we can desire, we can at least hope one day to have more of them. A careful study of history, a study so important and so difficult, consists in combining in the most perfect manner these defective materials: such would be the merit of an architect, who, from some curious learned remains, should trace in the most



probable manner, the plan of an ancient edifice; supplying, by genius and happy conjectures, what was wanting in these unformed and mutilated ruins.

It is in this point of view that we ought to consider the work of M. de Montesquieu. He finds the causes of the grandeur of the Romans in that love of liberty, of labour, and of their country, which was instilled into them during their infancy; in those intestine divisions, which gave an activity to their genius, and which ceased immediately upon the appearance of an enemy; in that constancy after misfortunes, which never despaired of the republic; in that principle they adhered to of never making peace but after victories; in the honour of a triumph, which was a subject of emulation among the generals; in that protection which they granted to those people who rebelled against their kings; in the excellent policy of permitting the conquered to preserve their religion and customs; and that of never having two enemies upon their hands at once, and of bearing every thing of the one, till they had destroyed the other. He finds the causes of their declension in the aggrandizement of the state itself; in those distant wars, which obliging the citizens to be too long absent, made them insensibly lose their republican spirit; in the privilege of being citizens of Rome granted to so many nations, which made the Roman people at last become a sort of many headed monster; in the corruption introduced by the luxury of Asia; in the proscriptions of Sylla, which debased the genius of the nation, and prepared it for slavery; in that necessity which the Romans found themselves in of having a master, while their liberty was become burthensome to them; in that necessity they were obliged to of

changing their maxims when they changed their government; in that series of monsters who reigned, almost without interruption, from Tiberius to Nerva, and from Commodus to Constantine; in a word, in the translation and division of the empire, which perished first in the west by the power of barbarians, and which, after having languished several ages in the east, under weak or cruel Emperors, insensibly died away, like those rivers which disappear in the sands.

A very small volume was enough for M. de Montesquieu to explain and unfold so interesting and vast a picture. As the author did not insist upon the detail, and only seized on the most fruitful branches of his subject, he has been able to include in a very small space, a vast number of objects distinctly perceived, and rapidly presented, without fatiguing the reader. While he points out a great deal to us, he leaves us still more to reflect upon; and he might have entitled his book, *A Roman History for the use of Statesmen and Philosophers.*

Whatever reputation M. de Montesquieu had acquired by this last work, and by those which had preceded it, he had only cleared the way for a far grander undertaking for that which ought to immortalize his name, and render it respectable to future ages. He had long ago formed the design: and had meditated for twenty years upon the execution of it; or, to speak more properly, his whole life had been a perpetual meditation upon it. He had first made himself in some respect a stranger to his own country, better to understand it at last: he had afterwards travelled over all Europe, and profoundly studied the different people who inhabit it. The famous island, which glories so much in her laws, and which makes so bad a use

of them, had been to him in this long tour, what the isle of Crete had formerly been to Lycurgus,—a school where he had known well how to instruct himself, without approving every thing: in a word, he had, if we may so speak, examined and judged those celebrated nations and men who only exist at present in the annals of the world. It was thus that he attained by degrees to the noblest title which a wise man can deserve—that of legislator of nations.

If he was animated by the importance of his subject, he was at the same time terrified by its extensiveness; he abandoned it, and returned to it again at several intervals. He felt more than once, as he himself owns, his paternal hands fail him. At last, encouraged by his friends, he collected all his strength, and published the *Spirit of Laws*.

Scarce had the *Spirit of Laws* appeared, but it was eagerly sought after on account of the reputation of its author: but though M. de Montesquieu had wrote for the good of the people, he ought not to have had the vulgar for his judge. The depth of his subject was a necessary consequence of its importance. However, the strokes which were scattered up and down the work, and which would have been displaced if they had not arisen naturally from the subject, made too many people believe that it was wrote for them. People sought for an agreeable book, and they only found an useful one; the whole scheme and particular details of which they could not comprehend without some attention. The *Spirit of Laws* was treated with a deal of light wit; even the title of it was made a subject of pleasantries; in a word, one of the finest literary monuments which our nation ever produced, was at first re-

garded by it with much indifference. It was requisite that the true judges should have time to read it: they very soon corrected the errors of the multitude, always ready to change its opinion. That part of the public which teaches, dictated to that which listens to hear how it ought to think and speak; and the suffrages of men of abilities, joined to the echoes which repeated them, formed only one voice over all Europe.

It was then that the open and secret enemies of letters and philosophy (for there are of both kinds) united their darts against this work. Hence that multitude of pamphlets which were aimed against him from all parts, and which we shall not draw out from that oblivion in which they have sunk. If those authors had not taken proper measures to be unknown to posterity, it might be believed that the *Spirit of Laws* was wrote amidst a nation of barbarians.

M. de Montesquieu easily despised the dark criticisms of those weak authors, who, whether out of a jealousy which they had no title to have, or to satisfy the public ill-nature, which loves satire and contempt, outrageously attack what they cannot attain to; and more odious on account of the ill which they want to do, than formidable for that which they actually do, do not succeed even in this kind of writing, the facility of which, as well as its object, rendered equally mean. He placed works of this kind on the same level with those weekly newspapers of Europe, the encomiums of which have no authority, and their darts no effect; which indolent readers run over without giving credit to, and in which sovereigns are insulted without knowing it, or without deigning to revenge it. But he was not equally indifferent about those principles of irreligion which

they accused him of having propagated in the Spirit of Laws. By despising such reproaches, he would have believed that he deserved them; and the importance of the object, made him shut his eyes at the real meanness of his adversaries. Those men, who really want zeal as much as they are eager to make it appear that they have it, afraid of that light which letters diffuse, not to the prejudice of religion, but to their own disadvantage, took different ways of attacking him; some by a stratagem which was as peurile as pusillanimous, had wrote to himself; others, after having attacked him under the mask of anonymous writers, had afterwards fallen by the ears among themselves. M. de Montesquieu, though he was very jealous of confounding them with each other, did not think it proper to lose time, which was precious, in combating them one after another; he contented himself with making an example of him who had most signalized himself by his extravagance. It was the author of an anonymous and periodical paper, who imagined that he had a title to succeed Pascal, because he has succeeded to his opinions; a panegyrist

of works which no body reads, and an apologist of miracles which the secular power put an end to, whenever it wanted to do it; who call the little interest which people of letters take in his quarrels, impious and scandalous; and hath by an address worthy of him, alienated from himself that part of the nation whose affections he ought chiefly to have endeavoured to keep. The strokes of this formidable champion were worthy of those views which inspired him; he accused M. de Montesquieu of spinosism and deism (two imputations which are incompatible); of having followed the system of Pope (of which there is not a word in his works); of having quoted Plutarch, who is not a christian author; of not having spoken of original sin and of grace. In a word, he pretended that the Spirit of Laws was a production of the constitution *Unigenitus*; an idea which we may perhaps be suspected of fathering on the critic out of derision. Those who have known M. de Montesquieu, and who understand his work, and that of Clement XI. may judge by this accusation of the rest.

(To be concluded in our next.)

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#### DETACHED ANECDOTES.

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“SEE ALL THINGS FOR MY USE.”

**S**UPERSTITION has often arisen from an overweening idea of our own self-importance, as if all the movements of nature, ordinary, and extraordinary, had some reference to our puny concerns. It is related of Henry IV. of France, who though possessing in many respects a strong mind, was not free from a debasing superstition, that a comet which appeared in 1607, gave him much a-

larm, and induced him to take precautions for the health of his children, because the astrologers gave out that it threatened their lives. Henry IV. said to Matthieu, his historian, who relates it, “that the comet had shed its influence on the daughter of the King of England; and that through God’s mercy, the astrologers had been mistaken.” What folly! The revolutions of the heavenly bodies had no concern with